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C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 001545

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV HR NATO

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S INTRODUCTORY MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT MESIC AND FM PICULA

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR FRANK FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) ON JULY 2 AMBASSADOR FRANK TOLD PRESIDENT MESIC AND FM PICULA THAT THE U.S. WOULD WORK WITH THE GOC TO PROMOTE DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, REFORMS OF THE ECONOMY, AND CROATIAN MEMBERSHIP IN NATO AND THE EU. HE CAUTIONED THAT THE GOC MUST COOPERATE WITH THE ICTY AND WORK TO RESOLVE RETURNS ISSUES. AMBASSADOR FRANK SUGGESTED THAT THE GOC COULD DO MORE TO IMPROVE COORDINATION ON ISSUES RELATED TO THE GWOT.
END SUMMARY.

MEETING WITH FM PICULA

¶2. (C) DURING AN INTRODUCTORY CALL ON JULY 2, AMBASSADOR FRANK AND FM PICULA EXCHANGED VIEWS ON THE STATE OF U.S.-CROATIA RELATIONS. PICULA REVIEWED THE FOREIGN POLICY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT, WHICH HAD REMAINED REMARKABLY STABLE OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS. THE COALITION'S AGENDA WAS AMBITIOUS AND BEGINNING TO BEAR FRUIT, ESPECIALLY IN THE ECONOMIC SECTOR. PICULA EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE TO CROATIA OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE EU AND NATO. HE WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT THE U.S. AND CROATIA WOULD CONTINUE THEIR CLOSE COOPERATION, BUILDING ON PAST ACCOMPLISHMENTS. U.S. AND EU SUPPORT TO ACHIEVING CROATIA'S FOREIGN POLICY GOALS WAS ESSENTIAL. PICULA SAID THAT RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF CLOSE COOPERATION BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND BRUSSELS WAS CRUCIAL.

¶3. (C) AMBASSADOR FRANK NOTED CROATIA'S MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND AGREED THAT THERE WAS MORE YET TO BE DONE. IN THIS REGARD, THE U.S. FULLY SUPPORTED THE GOC'S ASPIRATIONS FOR EU AND NATO MEMBERSHIP. THE U.S. CERTAINLY WAS NOT ASKING CROATIA TO CHOOSE BETWEEN NATO AND THE EU. HE NOTED THAT THE GOC MUST COMPLY WITH THE ICTY, ACCOMMODATE ALL RETURNEES, NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, REFORM THE JUDICIAL SECTOR AND CONTINUE BUILDING A MARKET ECONOMY. WHILE CROATIA HAD BEEN HELPFUL IN THE GWOT, IT COULD DO MORE. AS AN INDICATION OF OUR COMMITMENT, THE U.S. HAD TO DATE PROVIDED \$285 MILLION IN ASSISTANCE TO CROATIA. AMBASSADOR FRANK EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF USING PRIVATE COMMUNICATIONS TO DISCUSS POTENTIALLY DIVISIVE ISSUES.

¶4. (C) PICULA SAID HE WOULD RAISE THE AMBASSADOR'S POINTS WITHIN THE CABINET, ESPECIALLY ON CLOSER COOPERATION IN THE GWOT. HE ALSO PLEDGED THAT HE WOULD NOT RAISE DIVISIVE BILATERAL ISSUES IN THE PRESS.

MEETING WITH PRESIDENT MESIC

¶5. (C) FOLLOWING HIS PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS ON JULY 2, AMBASSADOR FRANK MET PRIVATELY WITH PRESIDENT MESIC AND TWO SENIOR ADVISORS. THE AMBASSADOR RAISED THE SAME ISSUES WITH MESIC WHO SAID HE WOULD "FIX" THE SHORTCOMINGS IN GWOT COOPERATION. HE ALSO PLEDGED TO WORK PRIVATELY WITH THE U.S. TO RESOLVE CONTENTIOUS ISSUES IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) WE ARE ENCOURAGED THAT BOTH PICULA AND MESIC TOOK A VERY POSITIVE TONE IN THESE MEETINGS AND HAVE CLEARLY RECOGNIZED THE SHORTCOMINGS OF DEALING WITH THE USG IN THE PRESS RATHER THAN USING PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE U.S. WE PLAN TO TEST THESE COMMITMENTS IN COMING WEEKS WITH BOTH THE PRESIDENT AND FOREIGN MINISTER.
FRANK

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